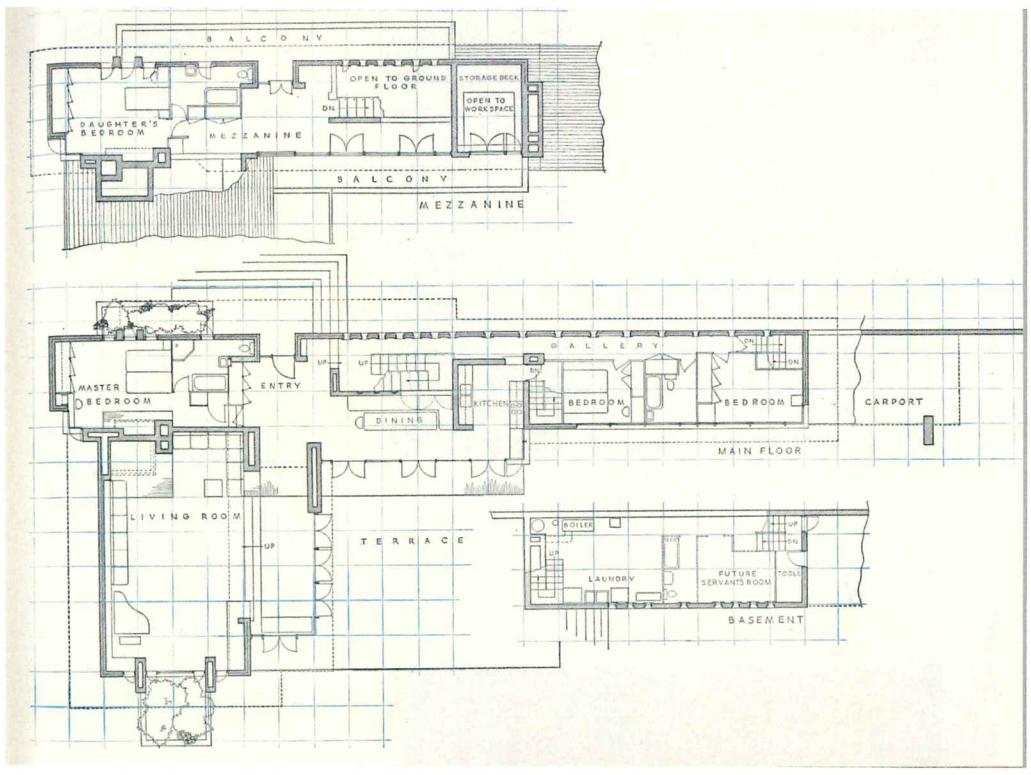
H. T. Mossberg House 1948

A Family Home

Herman and Gertrude Mossberg were both born and raised on 60th street in Chicago, Illinois. As a young man, Herman Mossberg would often travel by the Robie house on 58th street. This new and exciting design fired his imagination and set in motion his future desires.

In 1945 Herman and Gertrude Mossberg felt ready to move their family to a home that would reflect their style and taste. They contacted the much admired Frank Lloyd Wright with their needs and requirements hoping that someone in his practice would be able to design a home for them. This began a long period of correspondence to create their perfect home.



South Bend, Ind.
August 18, 1945

Mr. Frank Lloyd Wright,
Taliesin,
Spring Green, Wisconsin.
Dear Mr. Wright,

We are considering a new home planned around our family's interests and composition (father and mother) 16-year old daughter, and grandmother) The conventional or period house seems to us obsolete, and we are convinced that the kind of architectural thinking that you and the Taliesin Fellowship represent is what we want.

We like a tract of land approximately 220 ft. x 175 ft. (about an acre) on the very edge of the city and overlooking some rolling country, but have not purchased it as yet because we should like the architects' opinion of the site.

The following 3 restrictions are applied: —

1.) House must be 2 stories
2.) House must contain a minimum of 30,000 cubic feet.
3.) Plans must be approved by a committee of 3 men (but no restrictions are placed on style.)

We cannot afford to spend more than $ 20,000 for the building itself and would prefer if possible a cost nearer $ 15,000.

Under the circumstances outlined, our next step, and a most

important one, is to find the right architect, get his opinion of the site and then have general plans made.

We presume that you personally are so occupied with large and important projects that you cannot do the work, and we will appreciate very much your recommending someone with a background in your Taliesin Foundation with whom we can talk; preferably, of course, someone in this vicinity or in Chicago. Since the market for the land in this area is quite active just now, we need to decide on the site as quickly

(over)

as possible.

Very Sincerely Yours

Herman T. Mossberg

1010 E Oakside Blvd

So. Bend

SHERMAN T. MOSSBERG:1010 EAST OAKSIDE BLVD.:SOUTH BEND:INDIANA

My dear Mr. Mossberg: If you decide upon your site (from your description of it,it seems very desirable) - we will make plans for your approval if you will send us a topographical survey of the plot where you would like to build the house - contours one each foot in height - and a few photographs of the site and principal views. Any fine trees - etc.

We can see you through by sending an apprentice to get you started and superintend the work under our supervision.

Sincerely yours,
Frank Lloyd Wright

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August 21, 1945

There were ups and downs-the first design was turned down by the local building committee because it needed to be 2 stories. Mr. Wright also refused to appear before a board of his peers to be certified in Indiana. He refused to appear because he, of course, had no peers in Indiana. He put William Wesley Peters on as the architect in charge. After 4 long years of planning, they broke ground in the fall of 1949 and moved in during the spring of 1951.

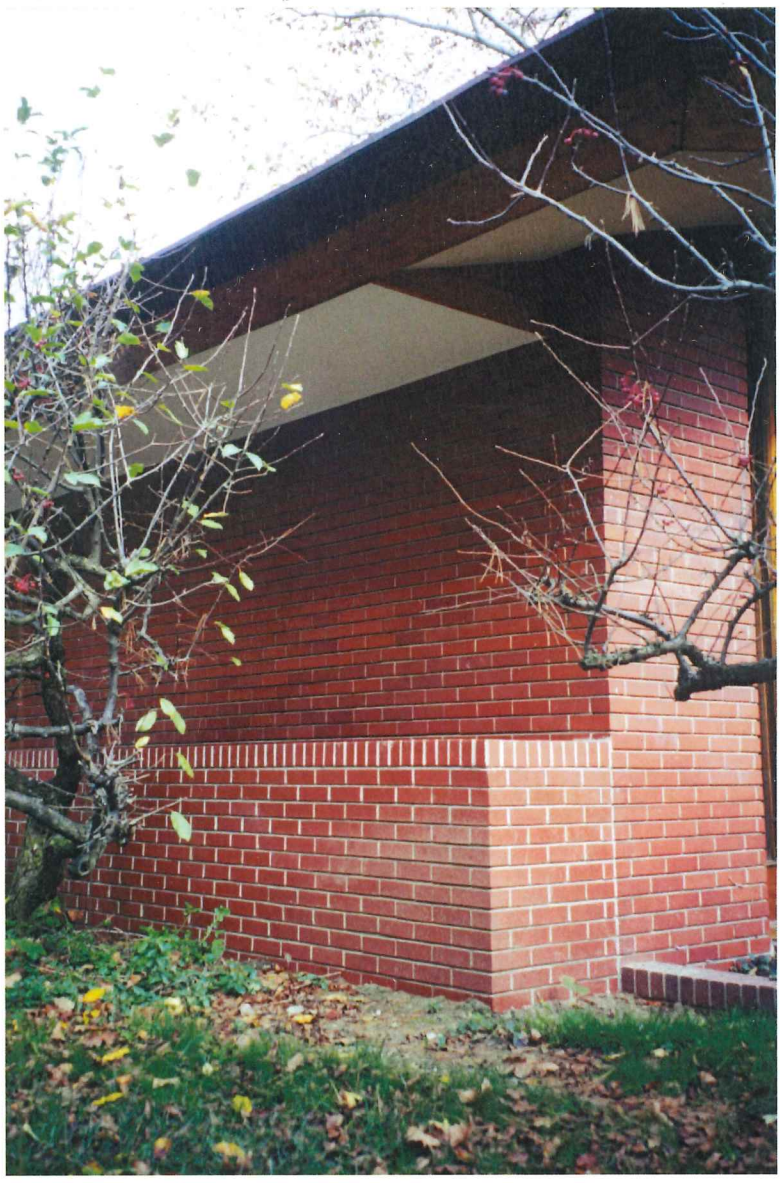
The Mossbergs found Mr. Wright pleasant to work with and quite amenable to their ideas and concerns. John Howe was the apprentice sent to South Bend to assist them. Mr. Howe was also working with the building of the Anthony and Brown houses in Michigan. These 3 houses went together to order many of the building supplies to help with costs. Mr. Howe lived with the Mossbergs and had an office at Mossberg & Company to work in. He developed a very close relationship with the Mossbergs and was responsible for many of the fine finish details that made the home serene and beautiful. Mr. Wright had to order him back to Wisconsin, but the Howes and the Mossbergs remained lifelong friends.

Family was very important to the Mossbergs and many happy gatherings and extended family celebrations were hosted here. Herman passed away in 1979. Gertrude remained in her home and loved it dearly. She loved the connection with nature that brought her joy every day, in every season. She was quite amazed to reach 100 years of age-surely due to her delight in life! She passed away in December of 1998, very eager to rejoin Herman, the love of her life.

The Mossbergs had one daughter, Anne. Anne and her husband Charles Hillman were not interested in taking on the house, but their oldest son, James, and his family were. James was the only one of his 5 siblings who remained in the area and who was willing to move here. James, Jill and their 3 sons, Conor, Christopher and Clark Hillman purchased the home and moved in during the fall of 1999.

The Mossberg house has been very lucky to remain very much as it was built. When the Hillmans moved in, some updating was necessary. The bathrooms and the kitchen were in desperate need of repair and a few upgrades. It was also time for a new roof. When the house was built in 1949, copper for the roof was specified but very difficult to obtain because of WWII. The Mossbergs went with a cedar shake roof. The Hillmans installed a copper roof in 2000. This roof used current technology that allowed long coils of copper to be rolled out and shaped into special "shingle" panels the length of the roof that fit together much like aluminum siding. This avoided the weakness of soldered seams in the originally designed copper panel roof.

While the home was designed to ventilate nicely, a series of 90 degree days can heat things up quite a bit. Air conditioning was added with a great deal of collaboration between contractors and owners. It was decided to put in 2 separate systems because there is no wall space for ductwork. One system is on the west side of the house, tucked into soffits and chimney chases. A brick wall was built to camouflage the system. On the east end, a high pressure system was installed. This involved a very clever plumber to loop the radiant heat pipes and cypress ducts to hide the tubes. Only one small hole had to be made in the concrete floor.



Having the same family own the house for its first 65 years is a benefit for its legacy. The home retains the same furniture, an archive of correspondence with Mr. Wright and even the same decorative touches suggested by Mr. Wright. There have been a few slight color changes in the pillows and cushions, but the serene spirit of the house remains unchanged.